

# Family Connections

Volume 4, Issue 2, Fall 2005

## November is National Adoption Awareness Month

"Adoption Awareness" is a concept that many of you live and breath every day. During the month of November, the nation takes pause to join you in the on-going effort to educate the community and celebrate adoption. Following is some additional information on National Adoption Awareness Month 2005.

### History

The history of National Adoption Month can be traced back more than 25 years. In 1976, the governor of Massachusetts first proclaimed Adoption Week and, later that year, President Gerald Ford made it official nationally. The number of States proclaiming the observance of Adoption Week in November grew, and in 1990, National Adoption Week became National Adoption Month. Today, National Adoption Month is celebrated throughout the United States during the month of November.

### National Adoption Month 2005

The theme of National Adoption Month 2005 is "Answering the Call." This theme builds on *The Collaboration to AdoptUsKids* national recruitment campaign. The purpose of National Adoption Month is to raise awareness about the 119,000 children in foster care nationwide waiting for permanent families. Recruitment efforts are highlighted throughout the National Adoption Month website to encourage America's families to "answer the call" to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of our children.

### National Adoption Day

Now in its sixth year, National

Adoption Day, November 19, 2005, has made the dreams of thousands of children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, and advocates to celebrate and finalize adoptions. Local areas participating include St. Louis County and the Southeast Region of the state.



### Resources

For more information on Adoption Awareness Month or to find additional resources, check out the following websites:

- [www.dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/activity/index.htm](http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/adopt/activity/index.htm), is a resource to learn about local activities happening now and throughout the year. Additional information, resources, past

newsletters and more are there.

- [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org) provides information for parents and professionals on adoption related initiatives. This site also hosts profiles of children across the US looking for a permanent home.
- <http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm> is the website of the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. It has additional information on National Adoption Awareness Month. The site also has general adoption information, statistics, and research.
- [www.adoptionclubhouse.org](http://www.adoptionclubhouse.org) is designed with your child's adoption needs in mind. Activities and information on the site give a sense of belonging to a wider adoption community of peers. It also has a section for parents.

**Thank you for all you do!!**

## Meet Tyree

*Cars and music are at the top of his list.*

Tyree is a slender, handsome, goal-oriented 13 year old with many interests. At the top of his list is cars and music. He loves to watch TV shows about building cars and motorcycles, and dreams about becoming a famous rapper after completing college. Some of Tyree's other fun activities include Playstation, going out to eat (especially for pizza, ribs, or hamburgers), playing football and basketball.

Tyree receives average to above-average grades, and works hard to meet the challenges that life offers. Currently, he participates in a group that helps prepare children and teens for adoption. This experience has helped Tyree think about adoption, and realize how much he would like to be placed with a patient and loving mom. He would also like to have either a dad or an involved, active man in his life as a role model.

To learn more about Tyree, contact Angela Metzger at 816-531-5465 or by e-mail [ametzger@downeside.org](mailto:ametzger@downeside.org).



***“Parent to Parent” is written by foster/adopt parents that are in the day-to-day “trenches” just like you. Articles are the sole opinion of the author. Submissions may be made to [denisekelley@foster-adopt.org](mailto:denisekelley@foster-adopt.org).***

## **Talking to children about Adoption Assistance by Rita Laws, Ph.D.**

*Rita Laws is the mother of 12 children through adoption and birth. Rita is from Oklahoma, and the author of numerous books and articles—many pertaining to adoption and parenting. Below she offers her perspective about sharing adoption assistance information with adopted children.*

For years, a friend of mine who has adopted several children with special needs maintained that her kids had no business knowing anything about adoption assistance contracts. I have always had a different view. I have been open with my children about this information. My children have overheard conversations in which I assist other families who need adoption assistance. They know I am indirectly helping waiting and adopted children by directly helping their potential and present adoptive parents.

When my friend's daughter brought in the mail one day and accidentally opened her own adoption subsidy check, the teen assumed the worst. At 16, she was a typical adolescent who regularly viewed her mom more as an enemy than an ally. Further, she had no concept of how much it costs to raise a child. As my friend tried to explain the why and how of adoption assistance, her daughter barely listened. She simply insisted over and over that her mother buy her a car “with all these checks.”

Personally, I would rather have control over when and how the information is communicated. If we say nothing to our children, it may seem that we are ashamed or embarrassed about accepting assistance. Assistance has enabled me to adopt multiple times, and I am proud of the assistance I have negotiated for my children just as I am of my self-employed income. Between the two, I can pay the bills. If I communicate pride, my children will share the feeling.

### **Deception and Adoption**

In North America, we have a long, sad history of lying to adopted persons, through outright lies and by withholding the truth. Throughout most of the 20th century, birth mothers were told to keep their experience secret, and adoptive parents were encouraged to pretend that their adopted children had been born to them. I have a second cousin who found out he was adopted when he was in his 50s—at his adoptive mother's funeral.

### **Why We Have Assistance**

Without a doubt, it is in our nation's and world's best interests to promote the healthy development of well-adjusted children. Children are a priceless societal resource. For this reason, our government has determined adoption assistance and Medicaid are practical investments. The support encourages parents to adopt children from foster care, and keep those children healthy and out of emergency rooms.

### **Honesty, Developmental Appropriateness, Compassion**

Just as we can find honest and appropriate ways to convey difficult or even painful information to our children about past abuse or

neglect, we can also find honest ways to convey complex information. Adoption assistance, Medicaid, and other adoption services can be hard for children to understand. On the surface, it may look like mom or dad is being paid to parent.

It might be easier to lie in the short run, but lying to the child or withholding information about his or her adoption assistance is not wise or ethical. The answer is to convey information to your child a little at a time, honestly, compassionately, and in a developmentally appropriate manner.

### **Information Sharing Reminders**

**The sooner you begin to share assistance information with your child, the easier it will be for all involved.** When you start sharing early on, you can start small, and add detail as warranted. You don't ever have to lie; you can just share the truth in developmentally appropriate ways.

**Chronologically or developmentally young children do not need specifics.** Simple explanations work best: “The Medicaid card helps us pay for doctor visits.”

**Parents are best equipped to decide when more detail is appropriate for a specific child.** When making the call, consider your child's ability to trust you, or anyone. Children with trust issues probably would not handle detailed subsidy information well because they cannot trust the truth of what they are told.

**When broaching the topic of assistance and Medicaid to older, more developmentally mature children, appeal to their interests.** Teenagers, for example may be able to appreciate how oil changes and tune-ups help cars to stay “healthy,” and how taking the car to a mechanic at the first sign of trouble can prevent more costly repairs later on.

**Until your child understands the value of money firsthand (for instance, after she gets a job, buys her own clothing and food, or pays rent), detailed discussions about the exact amount of the assistance payments are not necessary or appropriate.** High school is the ideal time to begin teaching a mature teen how to write and keep a household budget.

### **Final Thoughts**

For adoptees, knowledge and truth really are powerful. They can keep the adoptee from being manipulated or having his/her life-view hijacked by someone who has information the adoptee doesn't. Many adopted persons will also tell you that secrecy and deception hurt, even when well-intentioned. Happily, we don't have to omit the truth. We only need to present it in the right way at the right time. As adoptive parents, we know that adoption assistance is not about money, but about being able to appropriately care for our children and address their special needs. If we are clear about this, our children will be too.

*This article was adapted, with the author's permission, from the Summer 2004 edition of Adoptalk—published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 70 Raymond Ave., Ste 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036. To read the entire article, go to [www.nacac.org/pas\\_resources.html](http://www.nacac.org/pas_resources.html).*

*“Parent to Parent” is written by foster/adopt parents that are in the day-to-day “trenches” just like you. Articles are the sole opinion of the author. Submissions may be made to [denisekelley@foster-adopt.org](mailto:denisekelley@foster-adopt.org).*

## Commitment as a Fostering Competency

by Lori Ross

*Lori Ross has been a foster and adopt parent for twenty years. She is also Executive Director of Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association based in Kansas City, MO. Below is her view on assessing parent commitment.*

There are different reasons why people become foster parents. Some have the desire to parent and are unable to have children the old-fashioned way. Others have the motivations of their religious beliefs to push them toward helping children. Still others want to help children heal from the trauma of abuse and neglect; they have visions of ‘saving the world’ one child at a time. Ultimately, all foster parents share a desire to give children a better life.

With this as a common understanding, it is difficult then to understand why the issue of **commitment** is left virtually unaddressed in the competencies we expect potential foster parents to possess. In fact, commitment seems to be a term that is directly contrary to the concept of fostering. Fostering implies temporary. We expect foster parents to love a child and care for them as they would their own, and then be prepared at any moment to let them go. We do pre-placement visits as a method of trying on a child for size. We need to see if they fit in our family, and if we fit with what the child is looking for in terms of a temporary replacement for their own beloved family. Again, the expectation is that if we don’t like the fit, we can send the kid back and wait for the next offer.

It is common for children to experience, because of our preoccupation with the idea of “temporary,” multiple placement changes within short periods of time. I was my three year old foster son’s 7th placement in six months. Because foster parents are seen as volunteers that only keep children out of the goodness of their hearts, there is no evaluation method that looks at the level of commitment a family is able to develop and demonstrate. No one is looking to see whether a foster family is moving children for minor or arbitrary reasons. No one is assessing the impact this lack of commitment

is having on the children.

I have a unique perspective. As a long time (20 years) foster parent, who has fostered hundreds of children, I am guilty of having children moved from time to time. As an adoptive parent of 15 children, I am now dealing with the impact that multiple moves have had on my already abused and neglected children’s lives. As the Executive Director and volunteer advocate for Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, I hear daily from foster/adoptive parents who are on both sides of the coin. Some want to move kids, while some continue to struggle with the outrageous behaviors that accompany the attachment disorder/strain that develops when kids can’t trust that anyone really wants to care for them.

What I see too often is that kids are being moved because of inconvenience. I hear from my fellow foster parents that dealing with a particular worker, or a child’s annoying behavior, or sibling conflicts, or adjustment issues, is just too darn hard. It is just easier to move them than to continue to struggle to find the solution for the problem. And folks, as one of you, I am here to tell you that that is NOT OKAY! There are very few reasons to move a child. 1. You are a danger to them (without them leaving you are at serious risk for abusing them). 2. They are a danger to you or to other children in your home (this would cover sexual perpetrating on younger kids, fire starting, etc...). 3. You have decided that foster care is just not your cup of tea. (In this case, you submit your license to the Children’s Division and find other ways to save the world.)

There might be one or two other very reasonable things that could cause you to move a child, but they aren’t occurring to me right now. What occurs to me are the names and faces of the hundreds of children who are being abused (through unnecessary moves) by foster parents who set out to help them. When you do the pre-placement visits, please take them very seriously. When you accept a placement and sign the placement agreement, please consider that your contract to stick with that kid until they go

home or are adopted. I know they aren’t easy. That is why the Children’s Division,

MFCAA, and its sister agencies through Missouri, therapists contracted to provide services, and many other wrap around services must be made available to help stabilize and maintain difficult placements. We need to look at each placement a child has as a critically important placement. We must be willing to do the same hard work to maintain the ‘foster’ placements as we are willing to do to return children to their biological family homes. I truly believe that if we cannot figure out how to stop traumatizing children as they bounce within the system, we should stop removing them from abusive homes in the first place.

The other owner of the problem of multiple moves is the Children’s Division. Until CD staff are as serious about supporting and retaining alternative care resources, as we are about being those resources, systemic abuse will continue. At the top, retention of resource families must become a financial priority for our yearly Children’s Division Budget. At the frontline and just above, inconvenience or personality conflict must be resolved through the difficult process of communication. If we could learn to talk to each other and compromise, we could avoid frivolous moves for children. I hate to hear that rural families go years without a placement telephone call when the next county over has more children than appropriate homes available. I hate to hear that a worker didn’t like Mrs. So-and-So’s attitude on the phone, so they sought out and found other placements for the children in her home. Again, there are very few reasons to move a child. Inconvenience is not among them.

We don’t set out to hurt kids, we set out to help. The only way we can help them is by recognizing the problems that create the hurt, working to solve them, and communicating with each other using the important concept of mutual respect. Commitment needs to be a competency, for foster parents and for social workers. Fostering is temporary, but the impact of poor fostering decisions is lifelong. Let us begin to work together to fix this.

### Education Advocacy

by Jacqueline Kutnik-Bauder, Director, Children's Legal Alliance  
[www.lsem.org](http://www.lsem.org)

**Once every minute a Missouri public school student is suspended.<sup>1</sup>** Children are suspended for everything from truancy to serious criminal behavior. Behavior such as fights, which used to result in short term suspensions, now often lead to permanent expulsion. What you may not know is that under Missouri's "Safe Schools Act,"<sup>2</sup> a child who is suspended or expelled from one public school is often excluded from all schools. In other words, some children are completely denied an education in Missouri. For this reason, it is very important that parents and other interested adults understand the laws relating to suspensions and expulsions. Don't assume that your child is not at risk because of their age. Legal Services has represented children as young as six years old who are facing long-term suspensions. Hopefully, the information below will help to clear up some of the basic misunderstandings about suspensions and expulsion. For information regarding a specific child's situation, however, it is always best to contact an attorney.

#### Who Can Suspend or Expel?

Principals can suspend students for up to ten (10) days. Any suspension by a principal must be immediately reported to the Superintendent, who can revoke the suspension at any time. Superintendents can suspend students up to 180 days (one school year). A student or parent may appeal a Superintendent's suspension for more than ten (10) days to the board of education. School Boards are the only entities that have authority to permanently expel a student from school.<sup>3</sup>

#### What Behavior Can Lead to Suspension or Expulsion?

Local school boards must develop written discipline policies that outline the district's code of conduct and the consequences for violating the code of conduct.<sup>4</sup> The discipline policy must be distributed to each student and parent at the beginning of the school year and a copy of the policy must be available in the Superintendent's office. Generally, the school cannot suspend or expel a child for behavior that is not listed in the discipline policy. In other words, the student has to be given fair warning.

There are specific laws that give the school districts authority to exclude children from school. Chapter 167 of the Missouri Statutes allows for the suspension or expulsion of students in several situations: the conduct of the student is prejudicial to the good order and discipline of the schools or tends to impair the morale or good conduct of the pupils; the student has been charged with, convicted of, or plead guilty to the commission of a felony criminal violation (this means in adult court not juvenile court); a student can be immediately removed upon a finding that the pupil poses a threat of harm to himself or others.

In addition, under the Safe School's Act, students charged or convicted of any of nine law crimes cannot be readmitted or enrolled in a regular school program.<sup>5</sup> The criminal violations are: First degree murder, second degree murder, first degree assault, forcible rape, forcible sodomy, robbery in the first degree, distribution of drugs to a minor, arson in the first degree, and kidnapping. Although the law allows the school district to re-enroll a

student in a regular school program if the charges are dropped or the student is found not guilty, not all school districts do so. The courts have not yet decided whether it is appropriate for a school to continue to exclude a student who has been found not guilty of one of these charges. It is also important to note that this part of the law only excludes students from a "regular program of instruction."<sup>6</sup> The law is clear that the school district can choose to provide these students with alternative education programs.<sup>7</sup> However, Children's Legal Alliance believes that the Missouri Constitution and state laws require the school districts to provide an alternative education program to all children who are suspended or expelled. Whether the courts agree with our legal position remains to be seen. Finally, it is very important to keep in mind that most school officials are not experts in criminal law and often make mistakes about whether or not a child should be excluded from school under this provision. Do not assume that they are reading the law correctly, they often are not!

#### What Rights Does the Student Have?

Before a student can be excluded from school, even for ten (10) days, the school must provide the student with certain protections, called due process. At a minimum, the student must be told what the charges are against him/her and must be given an opportunity to present his/her side of the story. If a student is suspended or expelled by a school district, they generally have the right to file for a "trial de novo" in the courts.<sup>8</sup> A trial de novo is basically a new hearing in front of a state or federal judge. The benefit of a trial de novo is that it includes all of the formal protections that a student does not usually receive in an



## Youth Advocacy

expulsion hearing. For example, the right to cross-examine witnesses or to force witnesses to testify.

### **If a Student is Expelled from One District can they Enroll in Another?**

The short answer is “no.” If the incident resulting in the suspension or expulsion in the old district would have also resulted in a suspension or expulsion in the new district, the new district has the right to honor the suspension or expulsion.<sup>9</sup> Although the districts can choose not to uphold another district’s suspension or expulsion, in practice they almost always do. This includes suspensions or expulsion from private schools and charter schools. However, when dealing with suspensions or expulsions from private schools you should always keep in mind that these schools may not be required to provide the same protections to their students as public schools. For example, a private school may expel a child without providing them with an opportunity to tell their side of the story. There is a good legal argument to be made that the public school district cannot honor a suspension or expulsion by a private school that did not provide the student with the same rights and protections that are required of the public school district.

### **Are Special Education Students Subject to the Same Rules?**

Children who are identified as having a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) have certain additional protections. Specifically, if a school district wants to suspend a student for more than ten days in a school year, they must hold a manifestation hearing to decide whether the behavior is related to the child’s

disability. Under IDEIA, a student cannot be suspended for more than ten (10) days for behavior that is related to their disability. A significant exception to the ten-day rule exists for students who are alleged to have brought illegal drugs or a weapon to school (or to a school function) or who have “inflicted serious bodily injury” on another person while at school. Serious bodily injury means an injury with a substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted and obvious disfigurement, protracted loss or impairment of a bodily member, organ or mental faculty. These students can be moved to an alternative educational setting for up to forty-five days, regardless of whether the behavior is related to their disability.<sup>10</sup> If the behavior is not related to the child’s disability, the school may impose all of the regular discipline options (e.g. long-term suspension and expulsion) provided that the student continues to receive

educational services. According to the federal regulations, educational services for disabled students include those necessary to “enable the child to appropriately progress in the general curriculum and appropriately advance toward achieving the goals set out in the child’s IEP...”<sup>11</sup> In other words, even if a student with a disability is suspended or expelled for behavior that is not related to their disability, the school must provide the student with both special education and general education curriculum.

<sup>1</sup>State of Missouri’s Children 2000, Children’s Defense Fund

<sup>2</sup>RSMo 2000 Sec. 167.171

<sup>3</sup>Mo. Rev. Stat. §167.171

<sup>4</sup>Mo. Rev. Stat. §160.262

<sup>5</sup>Mo. Rev. Stat. §167.171

<sup>6</sup>Id

<sup>7</sup>Id

<sup>8</sup>Mo. Rev. Stat. §167.161.3

<sup>9</sup>Mo. Rev. Stat. §167.171.4

<sup>10</sup>20 U.S.C. §615 (k)(1)(A)

<sup>11</sup>34 C.F.R. 300.121(d)(2)(i)

## Meet Christopher

*A “sweetheart” who’s good at making friends.*

Chris, 9, is a well-rounded young man with lots of different interests. He enjoys all kinds of sports, including volleyball, bowling, track, and especially baseball. Chris’s other free-time activities include PlayStation, playing with action figures, learning about science, and art—especially pottery. Chris loves to be outdoors, and to be around animals. He likes school, earns good grades, and makes friends easily.



Described as “a sweetheart and real charmer,” when asked about his future, Chris said that he would like, someday, to work in a hospital where he would have a chance to make sick kids laugh.

Chris is hoping to find a “forever family” that will give him the help and support he needs to grow into a successful adult. To learn more about Chris, contact Dawn Phillips, Adoption Specialist, St. Francois County Children’s Division at 573-431-6592.

# Foster Parent Advisory Committee

## Local and state boards working for you

By Diane Bueneman, Chairperson

One way the Children's Division supports foster parents is through the on-going work of the Foster Parent Advisory Committee. Each area/region of the state holds local meetings headed by foster parents and supported by local Children's Division staff. The local boards work to resolve issues of local foster parents —i.e. problem solving, practice issues, and resource development. Some local boards combine meetings with training opportunities to assist parents in obtaining in-service hours. Any issues that can not be resolved locally are brought to the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Committee.

Below is information on previous accomplishments and current work of the statewide committee.

State Advisory Board meetings are held quarterly. They take place in March, June, September, and December at the Children's Division Central Office in Jefferson City. The goals of the Statewide Committee include the following: **Goal #1:** To use available internal and external data to identify systemic needs, and develop plans addressing those needs, using resources available within the agencies involved and the community as a whole. **Goal #2:** To improve partnerships between the Children's Division, other relevant state agencies (ie. Department of Mental Health), and foster parents through ongoing communication, input, and support. **Goal#3:** To work together with the Children's Division to clarify policy and practices, providing feedback and recommendations on present and proposed policies related to child welfare. **Goal #4:** Improve the Children's Division communication with, and resource families' knowledge of, Children's Division policy. **Goal #5:** To provide an opportunity for resource families, Children's Division staff, and the community to network and share resources.

The State Advisory Committee has been responsible for many improvements for foster parents, including: direct deposit, foster parent ID cards, diaper allowance, the Resource Handbook, and respite care policy changes. Currently, the group is addressing the issue of health insurance for foster parents and licensing standards.

Each region of the state is represented by at least one parent representative, elected by their local board, along with at least one representative from the Children's Division. The Statewide Committee is also made up of three foster parent associations--Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, Missouri Foster Parent Association, and the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition--and a representative from the Office of Child Advocate. To find out more about your local advisory board, phone or e-mail the individual listed in your area. If you are not sure which area you live in contact one of the foster parent associations.

### Area 1—Northwest Region

**Parent Rep.:** VACANT\*

**CD Rep.:** Amy Jackson; 660-258-3388;  
amy.jackson@dss.mo.gov

### Area 2—Northeast Region

**Parent Rep.:** Diane Bueneman; 636-928-2198; fisherofthelake@yahoo.com

**CD Rep.:** Lanette Bowring; 573-592-4090;  
lanette.bowring@dss.mo.gov

### Area 3—Southeast Region

**Parent Rep.:** Joan Lowery; 573-996-7534; joanielowery@yahoo.com

**CD Rep.:** Frances Gould; 573-290-5656;  
frances.j.gould@dss.mo.gov

### Area 4—Southwest Region

**Parent Rep.:** Robin Butts; 417-581-6475;  
robinbutts@yahoo.com

**CD Rep.:** Julie Lester; 573-346-3363;  
julie.lester@dss.mo.gov

### Area 5 - Kansas City

**Parent Rep.:** Dorothy Patterson; 816-820-0599 (cell) or 816-220-1388 (home);  
dpatterson06@aol.com

**Parent Rep.:** Mary LeFebvre; 816-941-9506; laremare@aol.com

**CD Rep.:** Gretchen Wheaton-Weston; 816-889-2042; gretchen.j.wheatonweston@dss.mo.gov

**CD Rep.:** Patty Champion; 816-889-2114;  
patty.champion@dss.mo.gov

### Area 6 - St. Louis City

**Parent Rep.:** Rene Murph; 314-961-2660 x 7774; murphr@webster.edu

**Parent Rep.:** Ann Barfield; 314-534-1645;  
fieldbar@swbell.net

**CD Rep.:** Annette House; 314-340-4918;  
annette.g.house@dss.mo.gov

**CD Rep. (alt.):** Angie Sample; 314-340-4859; angela.m.sample@dss.mo.gov

**CD Rep. (alt.):** David Swofford; 314-340-7085; david.r.swofford@dss.mo.gov

### Area 7- St. Louis County

**Parent Rep.:** VACANT\*

**Parent Rep.:** Shelia Harris Wheeler; 636-978-4066; pajamas5@charter.net

**CD Rep.:** Susan Shelton; 314-426-8402;  
susan.a.shelton@dss.mo.gov

**CD Rep.:** Monique Mitalovich; 314-426-8420; monique.y.mitalovich@dss.mo.gov

\*For more information on filling a vacancy in your area, contact your local CD Rep.

### Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association

**Jim McKenna; 417-538-4362; jlissa@centurytel.net** The Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association formed in 1972 by a group of foster parents who saw the need for a statewide organization for our children along with foster and adoptive parents.

MFCAA joined the National Foster Parent Association and became a member of its council of state affiliates that has a member of every state seated on the council. Our State President Jim McKenna is now a Board Member of NFPA as Region Seven Vice-President, (Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri).

Association members include foster parents, adoptive parents, Children's Division workers, concerned citizens, people who were adopted, and anyone interested may be a member. All associates have voting power.

I hope that you will join MFCAA as an associate or a group member by contacting Jan Eagleburger at [jeagleburger86@earthlink.net](mailto:jeagleburger86@earthlink.net). MFCAA is a non-profit organization with a 501-C-3 tax-exempt status. We hold our meetings every three months at different locations around the state so that all who would like to attend our meetings can do so without having to travel a long way.

Finally I want to thank all of our hard working foster and adoptive parents along with the Children's Division workers, who not only open their homes but their hearts to strangers in need and welcome them into your family.

**Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association** Lori Ross; 816-686-0463; [rross600@aol.com](mailto:rross600@aol.com) and Michelle Winberry; 816-965-9998; [mfcaa@mail.com](mailto:mfcaa@mail.com)

MFCAA hosted its Third Annual Foster Care and Adoption Conference in the Kansas City area at the end of September. The conference offered more than thirty topics on the issues surrounding foster and adoptive children, and provided training credit for social workers, attorneys and foster and adoptive parents. Special national keynote speakers came to Missouri to offer their expertise in parenting and advocacy. Dr. Foster Cline of the "Love and Logic" series offered three workshops and a keynote speech. Joe Kroll of NACAC provided training on support groups and parent led advocacy. The conference was well attended and inspirational for all.

Now that the conference is done for the year, MFCAA is gearing up for another exciting Holiday season. We are pleased to be offering another Foster and Adoptive Family Christmas Party, through the sponsorship of G.E. The party will be held on the First Friday in December, and all who are able are encouraged to bring the kids and join us. More information on all of MFCAA's programs and services is available online at [www.mfcaa.org](http://www.mfcaa.org) or toll free at 1-866-794-KIDS.

**Office of the Child Advocate**  
866-457-2302 (toll-free); [www.oca.mo.gov](http://www.oca.mo.gov); [oca@oca.mo.gov](mailto:oca@oca.mo.gov)

The Office of the Child Advocate will be publishing their second annual report in October. It will be available on the OCA website in late October or early November. You can view it on the website: [www.oca.mo.gov](http://www.oca.mo.gov). If you would like a hard copy of the annual report, please send an email to: [oca@oca.mo.gov](mailto:oca@oca.mo.gov). Be sure to provide your name and address for mailing purposes. The annual report documents statistics, findings, and recommendations from the Office of the Child Advocate for the past year.

Most of the complaints/inquiries to the Office of the Child Advocate come from biological parents but we also investigate complaints from foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship providers. Please feel free to contact us at our toll free number: 866-457-2302 or at the email address listed above if you have concerns or questions regarding actions or inactions by the Children's Division or other entities within the child protection system.

**Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition** Denise Kelley; 800-FOSTER-3; [denisekelley@foster-adopt.org](mailto:denisekelley@foster-adopt.org)

Website: FACC's website was recently updated to better serve YOU. Please visit us at [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) for the latest information on resources, training, support groups, the KidStore, Little Wishes, and much, much more!

Holiday Cheer: This Holiday Season, children living in Metro St. Louis will be treated to a FREE one-hour live theatre production of *Junie B. Jones*. Thanks to the generosity of local donors, nearly 600 children and their foster/adoptive families will enjoy the production on Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>. To learn how to get your tickets, go to our website, [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org).

Training: We held our last Training Extravaganza for 2005 in October. Throughout the year, more than 2,000 training hours were provided to local foster/adoptive families. Go to [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) to view the 2006 training schedule.

## **Meet LT & Durrell**

*Brothers with musical talent.*

Brothers Durrell and LT are waiting for a forever family. 15-year old Durrell is a charmer. His current foster parent describes him as "funny and friendly." One of Durrell's interests is fixing things and learning how they work. 14-year old LT is outgoing and loves to tell jokes. He is described as having a "sweet disposition."

One of LT's interests is art. He is an amazing artist with a talent for drawing.

Both brothers are also talented musically. Durrell enjoys singing country songs, and LT enjoys singing R&B. With a little encouragement, these brothers entertain with their well-practiced "Temptations" routine.

Durrell and LT will be a joyful addition to any family. If you think that you might be Durrell and LT's forever family and are willing to be loved by these two wonderful boys please contact Sheila Suderwalla, at 314-340-7785, 800-FOSTER-3, or [sheilasuderwalla@foster-adopt.org](mailto:sheilasuderwalla@foster-adopt.org).







# The “Four Doors” of Title IV-E

By Denise Kelley, Director of Family Advocacy, Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition  
MO Subsidy Representative for the North American Council on Adoptable Children

Quite frankly, prior to this past winter I didn’t pay too much attention to the issue of Title IV-E. I felt pretty comfortable that I knew how children qualified for Title IV-E but didn’t get into the “nitty gritty.” My experience was that MO children adopted or placed in a guardianship arrangement from foster care were able to access at least the “base services” offered through the adoption subsidy program. However, I recently realized what little I knew about Title IV-E--a crash course was needed immediately! The first point I had to come to terms with was that although a child has “special needs” that does not automatically qualify them as Title IV-E eligible. The second point of internal conflict I had to overcome was the fact that no matter how much I thought a child needed to and should meet the criteria for Title IV-E, Federal Regulation is Federal Regulation.

Below are the four eligibility requirements set by the Federal Government for a child to be considered Title IV-E for the purpose of adoption subsidy. Please realize this is a very simplistic explanation of the eligibility requirements. If you would like more detailed explanations or clarification, there are links at the bottom of of this page to guide you.

 <p><b>Door 1:</b> <b>Child is AFDC Eligible</b></p> <p>Adoption assistance eligibility that is based on a child’s AFDC eligibility at two points in time: 1) removal from biological home, AND 2) In the month the adoption petition is initiated. AFDC eligibility is reliant on both biological family of lower income (food stamps, public assistance) AND deprivation (deprived of parental support or care due to the death or absence of a parent; physical or mental incapacity of the parent and living with a specified relative).</p> <p>This door also requires that the <b>FIRST</b> court ruling that authorizes the removal of the child must indicate that it was contrary to the child’s welfare to remain in the home.</p>	 <p><b>Door 2:</b> <b>Child is SSI Eligible</b></p> <p>A child is Title IV-E eligible if, at the time the adoption petition is filed, the child meets the requirements for SSI benefits*, and prior to finalization of the adoption is determined by the State to be a child with special needs.</p> <p>There are no additional criteria that an SSI-eligible child must meet to be eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance.</p> <p><b>Attention foster parents:</b> You play an important part in Door 2! If you have a child in your home that has special needs and an application for SSI has not been made, please work with the case manager to make it happen.</p> <p>*<a href="http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10026.html">www.ssa.gov/pubs/10026.html</a> provides program information and SSI “rules” on disabilities.</p>	 <p><b>Door 3:</b> <b>Child of a Minor Child</b></p> <p>A child is eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance in this circumstance if: 1) the child’s parent is in foster care and receiving Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments that cover both the minor parent and the child at the time the adoption petition is initiated; AND 2) prior to the finalization of the adoption, the child of the minor parent is determined by the State to meet the definition of a child with special needs.</p> <p>If the child and minor parent have been separated in foster care prior to the time of the adoption petition, the child’s eligibility for Title IV-E must be determined based on the child’s current and individual circumstances.</p>	 <p><b>Door 4:</b> <b>Death or Dissolution of Prior Adoption</b></p> <p>In the situation where a child is adopted and receives Title IV-E adoption assistance, but the adoption later dissolves or the adoptive parents die, a child may continue to be eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance in a subsequent adoption. The only determination that must be made by the State prior to the finalization of the subsequent adoption is whether the child is a child with special needs. Since Title IV-E adoption assistance eligibility need not be reestablished in such subsequent adoptions, the manner of a child’s removal from the adoptive home, including whether the child is voluntarily relinquished to an individual or private agency, is irrelevant.</p>
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**Want more information?** The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) has collected a wealth of information through their Adoption Subsidy Resource Center. You will find information on the Federal Regulations that guide Title IV-E, Missouri’s definition of “special needs,” and much more on their website, [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org). Missouri also has two NACAC Subsidy Representatives that you contact for more information. They are: Lori Ross, Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (MFCAA), [www.mfcaa.org](http://www.mfcaa.org) (816-350-0215 or [rross600@aol.com](mailto:rross600@aol.com)) and Denise Kelley, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition (FACC), [www.foster-adopt.org](http://www.foster-adopt.org) (800-FOSTER-3 or [denisekelley@foster-adopt.org](mailto:denisekelley@foster-adopt.org)). To receive e-mail updates on “happenings” related to foster care and adoption contact MFCAA or FACC.



## Financial Aid & Scholarships ~ Now is the Time to Plan for Fall

### Scholarships

#### National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) Scholarships

The NFPA offers scholarships for foster youth who wish to further their education beyond high school, including college or university studies, vocational and job training, and correspondence courses, including the GED. Scholarships are also available for birth and adopted youth in foster homes.

Scholarship applications must be postmarked on or before March 31st. All applicants will be notified of the status on or before May 31st. For more information or to obtain an application, go to [www.nfpainc.org/index.cfm](http://www.nfpainc.org/index.cfm)

#### OFA/Casey Scholarship

##### Eligibility Requirements:

1. Applicants must have been in foster care for the consecutive 12 months prior to their 18th birthday--OR applicants must be able to provide death certificates for both parents and not have been adopted after the death of their parents; 2. Applicants must be under the age of 25 on March 31, 2006; 3. Applicants must be enrolled in or accepted into an accredited post-secondary program (college, university or vocational/technical) working towards a degree or diploma.

Applications for the 2006-2007 academic year will be available at [www.orphan.org/scholarships.html](http://www.orphan.org/scholarships.html) on January 1, 2006.

#### Students of Color in Post-Secondary Education--Casey Family Scholarships

Applicants must: 1. Verify their status as having aged out of the US foster care system; 2. Be graduating in good standing from an accredited vocational or technical training program, college or university in 2005.

This non-renewable scholarship of up to \$5,000 is available to minority students as commendation for their ambition and tenacity in pursuing a higher education. Awards will be made based on a combination of need and merit. Visit [www.orphan.org/casey\\_family\\_scholarships.html](http://www.orphan.org/casey_family_scholarships.html) for more information.

**Important Note:** Be very cautious if you are asked to pay for help in finding scholarships. Financial Aid professionals say you should never have to pay to access "free money."

### Education & Training Voucher

**Financial assistance for youth in foster care, former foster care youth, AND youth adopted after age 16**

Promoting Safe and Stable Families has expanded the federally funded program to include an educational and training voucher program. The addition allows youth aging out of foster care and youth adopted from foster care at age 16 or older to receive as much as \$5,000 per year toward the cost of their degree/certification. Participating youth in the program at the age of 21 may continue to receive funding until they reach the age of 23 as long as they are enrolled in a qualifying program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

*continue "aid" on Page 11*

### Meet Michael

*An energetic and creative young man.*

Michael is an adorable 10-year old, with sandy blonde hair and hazel eyes. Small for his age, Michael has a high energy level, and is always ready to help out around the house. If you have a home project that needs doing, Michael is definitely your man! Michael attends public school, where his favorite subject is math.

Michael is free for adoption, and is hoping to be adopted by a family that lives in the country and has animals. Michael would like to be placed with a "forever family" that has an older son--an older brother he can learn from. Michael would do best if placed with a family that can help him continue to find constructive outlets for his energy and creativity.

If you would like to learn more about Michael, contact Stephanie Ash, Adoption Specialist, Greene County Children's Division, at 417-895-6562.



## Research--Missouri Provides Guidance for Post Adoption Service

### Family Preservation with Post-Adoptive Families

The purpose of the study was to find out if Intensive Family Preservation Services was successful in preventing adoption disruptions. The study was a two-phase, one-year project funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Below is a summary of the research questions and findings.

#### To what extent is Intensive Family Preservation Services (IFPS) used with adoptive families?

- The use of IFPS was more common than other supports such as individual counseling for child or parent, adoption subsidies, or respite.
- Few states currently have the capacity to estimate or report the number or percentage of adoptive families who receive IFPS.
- There were differences between states that responded in the specific structure of the IFPS programs. Almost all (80%) provide a mix of therapeutic and concrete services, and in-home services. About half of respondents reported the use of basic tenets of IFPS such as providing the same caseworker to the family for the life of a case, intensity of services, and the provision of the majority of services in the home.

#### Is the basic IFPS program model used with adoptive families the same as that used with those families referred for child maltreatment?

- In a detailed analysis of the use of IFPS with adoptive families in both Missouri and Illinois, Missouri reports a model of service that closely follows the Homebuilders model: Family preservationist carry a caseload of 2 families for roughly 6

weeks, are directly available to the family 24 hours a day, provide concrete, skill-building, and therapeutic services primarily in the family's home, to families of children who are at immediate (within 72 hours) risk of placement.

- Both states report that the content of training for preservation workers who work with adoptive families is significantly enhanced with information of special importance to adoptive families. These content areas include grief and loss, attachment, parental expectations, and ways to enhance the parental characteristics of patience, flexibility, humor and acceptance.

#### How successful is IFPS with adoptive families in terms of (1) family preservation, (2) reduction of presenting problems, and (3) increase in parental satisfaction?

- The general survey of states was unable to provide specific or estimated answers to all or most of these questions. State data information systems are currently inadequate to supply program level information beyond basic placement rates, and cannot provide placement rates for a subset such as adoptive families.
- The detailed analysis of programs in MO and IL found the use of IFPS with adoptive families to be highly successful, in terms of family preservation (placement prevention), reduction of presenting problems, and parental satisfaction.
- In MO, 83% of the adoptive families studied were preserved by the end of IFPS. At a six-month follow-up, 76% remained intact. At a 12-month follow-up, 63% remained intact. No families contacted at the six or 12-month follow-up checks had legally disrupted; all families with children in

out of home placement were still committed to eventual reunification.

#### What are the characteristics of adoptive children and families served by IFPS and which of those characteristics are associated with the program success outcomes listed above?

- Available data did not allow comparisons between adoptive and non-adoptive families served with intensive family preservation services. Anecdotally and reasonably, the adoptive families served in these two programs appeared to be more stressed by the child's emotional problems, including grief and loss, and familial communication and stress problems rather than the abuse and neglect observed in most intensive family preservation programs.
- In MO, the adopted children who were most likely to experience placement during or after IFPS were those who were significantly older and IFPS was being used to reunify the family, rather than avert placement. Placement rates were highest for children served for delinquent or criminal behavior, running away, or where the family was experiencing physical violence, severe financial problems or medical illness or disability.

#### What are the characteristics of IFPS services offered and which of these are most associated with program success?

- This study relied on state administrative data, and there was little detail in these databases on the specific services provided to any particular family; therefore, this analysis cannot correlate specific services or service components with outcomes, or identify the critical service contributors to an adoptive family's success in staying together.

- In MO, services focused primarily on parent/child conflict, communication problems, the child's emotional issues, and school problems.

### Recommendations

- Findings from this study indicate the need for greater availability of IFPS services to adoptive families, given placement prevention rates in the 80% to 90% range, and high parental satisfaction.
- Ongoing training should be emphasized in IFPS programs for family preservationists and all team members. Relevant content should focus on topics that include: grief and loss, attachment, supporting children with emotional stresses, developing reasonable parental expectations, helping parents develop the characteristics of flexibility, patience, humor, tolerance, and acceptance.
- Improved data collection is needed so that administrative data can assist with program development and promotion of IFPS services with adoptive families.
- Specific data on components of services must be obtained so that programs can identify the effective elements of services with families, thus providing high-quality IFPS services during these times of contracting and limited resources.
- A deeper examination and evaluation of the specific program components and services used to help families reunite once an out of home placement has occurred is essential in order to prevent adoption dissolutions.
- Developing tracking systems for IFPS-Adopt cases to determine outcomes would allow them to be compared with outcomes of other IFPS cases and with other services that are used to prevent adoption disruptions.

### Are you facing a placement disruption?

IFPS in Missouri is referred to as Intensive In-Home Services. As the study conducted by the National Family Preservation Network indicated, services have been enhanced to better meet the needs of adoptive families. Requirements of the program include:

- the child is at immediate risk of being placed outside of the home;
- family members must be willing to participate--services are voluntary;
- program requirements include meeting 6-8 hours a week for the six week intervention.

Program availability may be limited in your area. To find out how to access services in your county, contact your adoption subsidy worker or your local Children's Division office.

*"aid" continued*

To receive an application for the voucher program, contact your local Children's Division Independent Living Program Specialist. Not sure who your specialist is? Ask your child's casemanager or go to [www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/index.htm](http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/index.htm). You can also obtain a voucher application at this site.

### Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)

Students should complete the FAFSA as soon after January 1, 2006 as possible. Some of the applications for scholarships and vouchers listed above will require the FAFSA to be completed. In addition, the FAFSA considers students for grants and work study programs. A child in foster care is considered an "emancipated minor" and therefore, do not need to submit any financial information for their parent/foster parent. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) for more information.

### Meet Devene & Devonta

*A fun pair who are a joy to be around.*

12 -year old Devene and 10-year old Devonta are a rambunctious pair who love to keep active and can be found out riding their bikes. They both enjoy art and reading.

Devene is "all girl," and takes great pride in her appearance. She enjoys writing and is quite good at it!

Devonta, her younger brother, is "all boy" and is very active. He enjoys sports, especially gymnastics, and can often be found doing flips.

Devene and Devonta both do well in school and are assessed to be above average. They are a fun pair and a joy to be around. They are looking for a family to keep them together and love them forever! If you think they could be a part of your family, please contact Naomi Frazer, Adoption Specialist, Jackson County Children's Division, at 816-889-2356 or [naomi.frazer@dss.mo.gov](mailto:naomi.frazer@dss.mo.gov).



**“Family Connections”**  
**Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition**  
**111 North 7th Street, 6th Floor**  
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**Team Spotlight**

*Many “players” make up the foster/adopt team. This section highlights individuals to help you get to know your teammates better.*



**Frederic M. Simmens (Fred) ~ Director of MO Children's Division**

**MO Department of Social Services • Children's Division • P.O. Box 88  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 • 573-526-6009**

Fred Simmens was appointed in August 2003 as the Children's Division Director for the State of Missouri. He is responsible for child welfare and early childhood services provided to families and children. He began his career with the Division of Family Services as a Social Service Worker in Jackson County, working with foster children and their families. Mr. Simmens also recruited and licensed foster families and supervised an alternative care unit. In 1982, he became County Director in Saline County. From 1984 to 1998 he held a variety of positions in the DFS Central Office including Assistant Deputy Director, where he was actively involved in the development of several programs including Behavioral and Medical Foster Care, Family-Centered Services, and the Multiple Response System for investigations of child abuse and neglect reports. In 1998, he

became the Chief Operations Officer for the Missouri Patient Care Review Foundation, a health care quality improvement organization. He returned to the Division of Family Services in 2002 as the Children's Services Director for Jackson County.

Mr. Simmens received a BA in Sociology from Benedictine College and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Mr. Simmens is married to Lori McGinnis and has two children--Mathew, age 23, and Mallory, age 18. Fred enjoys spending time with his family as well as camping, kayaking, and fishing. At home he spends extensive time keeping up with his 100-year old farm house.

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